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was reached with the counties to address the issues last year that were raised because of the costs that were being incurred by some counties but which could, in effect, be incurred by any counties in the state due to some of the inadequacies of the state system and some placements that judges are currently making because of the inadequacies of the state system. I will ask, after Senator Brashear opens on the committee amendments, for a division of that amendment so that you can take each of these bills separately. However, we will...I'd like to use this time to talk about them as a group because they do connect to each other and they are a part of the overall solution, and we need various aspects of all three bills in order to address the needs of the chronic serious offenders and youth with special needs within the system. First, let me tell you about why we are at a crisis point at this particular point in time, and give you a little history of the Office of Juvenile Services. The Office of Juvenile Services was created in 1993 by the Legislature in order to bring together and bring focus within state government to the services and placements for juvenile offenders who have been placed with the state. A lot of offenders that are arrested may not even go to court. Some of them are in diversion programs. A lot of them, in fact the majority, will be on probation. They may be with their parents, they may be in...

SENATOR SCHIMEK: One minute.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...placements with probation. But the majority of cases that we're going to be talking about today are with the Office of Juvenile Services. As of today, there are 978 total cases with the Office of Juvenile Services. Three hundred twenty-three of those are with facilities, that is, the youth centers at Kearney and Geneva; and 652 are in the community. By comparison, last year when we issued our report in December, the average number for Fiscal Year 1998 was 830, so we've seen a tremendous jump even in the last few months. In December of 1994, when the Office of Juvenile Services basically began, the total was 624 cases. What we're looking at with this bill is finding ways to create additional placements, to see that they are appropriately paid for, which is a responsibility of state government, and to create a master plan to be able to ensure that we have safe, appropriate placements for the youth